

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently amended) A process for separating azeotropic or close-boiling mixtures by ~~means of an~~ subjecting the mixtures to extractive rectification in which ~~an ionic salts which are~~ liquid at temperatures below 200<sup>0</sup>C liquid is used as entrainer, wherein a high-boiling bottom product is taken off from the column in vapor form via a side offtake.
2. (Currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the side offtake is positioned in ~~the~~ a stripping section of the column which has a plurality of plates including three bottommost plates, and wherein the side offtake is positioned in the region of the bottommost three plates, ~~preferably directly at the bottommost plate.~~
3. (Canceled)
4. (Canceled)
5. (Currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein ~~the~~ a bottom stream which has been depleted in high boilers is recirculated to the column, ~~preferably in the enrichment section, particularly preferably onto one of the uppermost 3 plates, very particularly preferably onto the uppermost plate.~~
6. (Currently amended) A process as claimed in claim [3] 14, wherein the ionic liquid which is recovered from the work-up stage is recirculated to the column, ~~preferably in the enrichment section, particularly preferably onto one of the uppermost 3 plates, very particularly preferably onto the uppermost plate.~~
7. (New) A process as claimed in claim 6, wherein the ionic liquid is recirculated in an enrichment section of the column.
8. (New) A process according to claim 6, wherein the ionic liquid is recirculated onto one of three uppermost plates in the column.
9. (New) A process according to claim 6, wherein the ionic liquid is recirculated onto an uppermost plate in the column.

10. (New) A process as claimed in claim 2, wherein the side offtake is positioned directly at a bottommost plate in the column.
11. (New) A process as claimed in claim 5, wherein the ionic liquid is recirculated in an enrichment section of the column.
12. (New) A process as claimed in claim 5, wherein the ionic liquid is recirculated onto one of three uppermost plates in the column.
13. (New) A process as claimed in claim 5, wherein the ionic liquid is recirculated onto an uppermost plate in the column.
14. (New) A process as claimed in claim 1, in which the ionic liquid present is submitted to vaporization in order for separation of high-boilers still present.
15. (New) A process as claimed in claim 1, in which the ionic liquid present is submitted to stripping in order for separation of high-boilers present.
16. (New) A process as claimed in claim 15, wherein the ionic liquid which is recovered is recirculated to the column.
17. (New) A process as claimed in claim 16, wherein the ionic liquid is recirculated in an enrichment section of the column.
18. (New) A process as claimed in claim 16, wherein the ionic liquid is recirculated onto one of three uppermost plates in the column.
19. (New) A process according to claim 16, wherein the ionic liquid is recirculated onto an uppermost plate in the column.